
The People Rus' in the Ninth – Middle Eleventh Centuries: New Approaches to the Study of Ethnogenesis and Politogenesis

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of this article is to try to give an outline of modern understanding of processes and mechanisms of formation of the people called Rus' and the polity of the Rurikid lineage. New interpretations of written sources are placed in the basis of the proposed approach. The later Old Russian narratives, first of all, the 'Primary Chronicle', are recognized as unreliable and secondary sources, and the basic factual basis is formed on the basis of documents (treaties, statutes and legal codes, etc.) and synchronous for the tenth century narrative texts, first of all, the Byzantine descriptions of the Rus' in special manuals on diplomacy and ambassadorial protocols. It is no less important now to understand the epistemological and practical limitations of the use of archaeological and linguistic data, and to eliminate schemes based on false interpretations of them. Following these guidelines, the article substantiates the following provisions. First, the autocatalytic process of development of a network of long-distance trade routes and the emergence of urban centres in their hubs became the basic factor for the formation of medium-scale polities on the East European Plain. Second, in the new settlements of the Upper and Middle Dnieper area in the tenth century, new mixed urban communities were formed, including groups of people who called themselves Rus'. Here, both politogenesis and ethnogenesis were triggered and stimulated by long-distance trade and urbanization. Third, no medi-

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um-size polity of the ninth and tenth centuries had the characteristics of an early state, because it was an ecumene without developed writing abilities. Only the complex chiefdom under the leadership of the Rurikids, after joining the Byzantine Christian Church, gained access to the technology of writing. This made it possible, in the first half of the eleventh century, to create a government machine of specialized functionaries, proto-bureaucrats, who produced the first state regulatory documents. By the mid-eleventh century, the early state in Rus' was established. In the same period, the elite and the population of the 'Rurikid empire' finally adopted the ethno-political label Rus', as a result of which a new Christian people with such a name appeared on the map of the Western Eurasia. These processes of ethnogenesis and politogenesis on the East European Plain in the ninth and eleventh centuries fit into the most standard models of socio-cultural and political anthropology.

Keywords: *state origins, chiefdoms, early state, early Rus', Old Rus-sia, political anthropology, polities of East European Plain.*

The articles by Nikolai N. Kradin (2023a) and Alexei A. Romanchuk (2023) published in the journal 'Social Evolution & History', which reveal the current problematic state of research on the emergence of the Rus' people and the formation of polities on the East European Plain in the early Middle Ages, first of all, the polity of the Rurikid lineage in the Middle Dnieper area, can rightly be called the optimal starting point for a new stage of discussion on these topics. Without going into unnecessary peculiarities of polemics on concrete issues, I would like to emphasize that Kradin's article sets the necessary conceptual framework for the description and analysis of processes of politogenesis at the end of the *first millennium* of the *New era* in the space from the Baltic to the Black Sea and from the Volga to the Danube and the Vistula. I will not hide the fact that Romanchuk's article raises a number of fundamental disagreements in my mind, which are not of a trivial, but, on the contrary, of a principled nature, first of all with regard to his attempt to once again present the discussion about the role of the natives of the Scandinavian peninsula in the formation of the early Rurikid state as the actual subject of contemporary historiography. But the basic and most valuable thing about his article is not this, but the fact that it raises the question of expanding the range of cultural impulses that influenced the emergence of *Old Russian material culture* (Shchhavelev 2023a) and of the *ethno-social organiza-*

tion of the Rus' people (Shchavelev 2024), and as such, his article is fruitful and interesting.

Nowadays, the description and analysis of ‘archaic’ (ancient and medieval) societies is most successfully carried out using the methods and meta-language of *socio-cultural anthropology*, and individual archaic polities are successfully studied and classified within the theoretical framework of *political anthropology*. Similarly, to analyse the processes of emergence and transformation of various *communities*, including *ethnic groups*, the so-called *constructivist theoretical approach* to their identification and description has been developed, which consists in the efforts of recording the reflection of ‘socio-cultural shells’, *i.e.*, *traces of manifestations of their unity* found in texts, images and material culture.

By the term *people* or *ethnos* (Latin: *gens, genus vel natio*; Greek: τὸ ἔθνος) I mean any *macro-community of collectives of different sizes and types*, aggregated by the idea of their unity (‘*supra-identity*’) and common rules of identification, co-optation and separation between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’. The type of identity of such a macro-community can be different: ethno-linguistic, ethno-cultural (ethno-historical), ethno-confessional or ethno-political, and, of course, any combination of these types is also possible. Such a *collective identity* is based on some common objectively observable and imagined features that become its *markers* (descent from common ancestors, common language and secondary modelling systems, common historical memory and political theology, stereotypes of behaviour, *etc.*).

Belonging to an *ethnic community* is determined, firstly, by the *collective perception* (social reference or collective decision) of *all the members of this community* or only by the decision of its elite, *i.e.*, the carriers, keepers and inventors of this *ethnogenetic* and *ethno-identifying tradition*. Secondly, the *individual's own self-identification*, his or her willingness to accept and share this endo-identity and the rights and obligations associated with it. And, thirdly, the *perception of external observers* (‘aliens’) of who exactly belongs (has the right to belong) to a given community and who does not. These three factors determine the ‘strategies of distinguishing’ between ‘their own’ and ‘aliens’ (Pohl 1998, 2013) and set coordinate systems (a system of rules and prohibitions) of identification, co-optation, exclusion from the community, as well as sanctions for assigning the status of belonging to community, respectively, rejecting it.

It is obvious that *ethnic identity* ('ethnicity') exists in parallel with, and often contradicts, political, religious and other types of endo- and exo-forms of solidarity. Apparently, this is the course of historical development. *Ethnic identity* makes it possible, firstly, to mobilize significant military and economic resources of dispersed, politically unconnected collectives, and, second, to preserve forms of communication between groups divided by political, confessional or other barriers. The most important feature of *ethnic identity* is its ability to persist after all other formalized ties (economic, legal, *etc.*) between its bearers have broken down. So, instrumentally, *ethnicity* is a *capacity for ethnic mobilization*.

I should note separately that the existence of communities with different types of identity, which do not form an *ethnic identity*, cannot be an argument in favour of the illusory nature of the historical phenomenon of individual *peoples* ('folks' 'ethnoses'), just as, for example, the existence of communities that have not created *states* cannot be an argument in favour of the falsity of the idea of the existence of states in the history of humankind (Shchhavelev 2024).

In modern *political anthropology*, *politogenesis* is studied in two basic aspects: first, in terms of identifying its *mechanisms*, *i.e.*, *causes* and *factors* (*cf.* Carneiro 2012; Stocker and Xiao 2019); second, in terms of *classifying the polities*, *i.e.*, the *results* of the action of these mechanisms. The limited empirical data (first of all, the urgent need to publish and generalize archaeological data), does not allow me to discuss the problems of the *mechanisms of politogenesis* on the East European Plain in the ninth and tenth centuries. The theoretical spectrum of external and internal factors is well outlined (Kradin 2023a: 69–76), but how they operated and what their specific weight was in the ongoing processes, remains unclear. The only thing that is clear now is that the emergence of *medium-size centralized polities* was the exception rather than the rule. And the emergence of the *early state* in these territories was not only not 'inevitable' (Claessen 2002), but, on the contrary, is seen only as a practically unique case – on this *path of social evolution*, only one Rurikid polity had time to go and pass it. And moreover, *chiefdoms* and *early states* in the region under study seem to have emerged from the same factors (*cf.* Grinin and Korotayev 2012).

I fully support the idea of *multivariate and alternative ways of evolution of social and political systems* (Bondarenko, Grinin, and Korotayev 2002, 2011). But the number of possible types of polities seems to me to be extremely limited. However, depending on different

historical conditions, the processes of political integration of local communities lead to the formation of either *centralized* or *decentralized* polities (Lewellen 2003: 16–41). The first option implies the formation of a *subordinate system of governance levels*, the second – the *creation of socio-communicative network clusters*.

Centralized polities in archaic societies are represented by two basic variants – *chiefdom* (*simple, complex, etc.*) and *pre-modern state* (*early and well-developed*) (Skalnik 2004, 2009; Claessen 2010; Earle 2021). The number of types of decentralized polities, *i.e.*, *tribes*, or other *nexus-type supra-local associations* (*confederations, associations, unions or corporations*), was apparently much more diverse, but they are, unless one imagines, very, very poorly recorded on the East European Plain in the early Middle Ages, both in written texts and in archaeological data. Moreover, as far as I understand it, this type of polity, or rather the *direction of evolution of supra-local integration*, shows exceptional variability and, so far, seems to be hardly amenable to a coherent typology based on defined distinctive features, including diagnostic markers. So, I do not yet have either a theoretical framework or an empirical basis for identifying this type of political systems in the section of spatial and temporal continuum I am studying.

In other words, my paper will deal with several *chiefdoms* of varying degrees of complexity and a single *early state*. A *complex chiefdom* and an *early state* can be, to a certain extent, considered as *functional analogues* (Grinin 2011). I do not favour the idea of looking for differences in *structures* (institutional, social, *etc.*), *scale* (one, two, three, or more levels of political control), or other *quantifiable signs* between *chiefdoms* and *early states*, and I am sure that these options cannot serve as diagnostic signals of their difference. But they are clearly distinguished by the *social group responsible for the system of governance*.

In the *chiefdom*, the common people are ruled by the *chief's kinsmen* (members of the lineage) and *clients* (*i.e.*, quasi-relatives or imaginary ‘artificial’ relatives). This chief and his (her) kinsmen have *inherited positions* in the power system, and a relative *monopoly on the manipulation of oral tradition, ritual and mnemonic practices*. They possess and distribute their *consolidation ideology* and *political theology* (see below). In the *early state*, *full-time professionals, i.e., functionary administrators*, mastered the statecraft using the technology of writing to exercise power. This ‘proto-bureaucracy’ monopolizes and simultaneously provides services in the quantification and standardization of taxes and other exchange-economy procedures; in the codifi-

cation and standardisation of legal matters and a wider range of social conflict resolution; in the triangulation and standardisation of territorial division and the control of the outer boundaries of the societal zone. In addition, it monopolizes and successfully trades in a *completely new technique of written fixation, accumulation and translation of the historical memory of its people, i.e.*, it possesses a new kind of cultural-symbolic capital. These full-time specialists in the management of power are *trained in particular skills of statecraft and extraordinary habitus* (see below).

Thus, the transition from *chiefdom* to *early state* was a shift from a social field of imagined genealogies and logocentric rituals to a written-documented and quantified space (*cf.* Bondarenko 2008).

Now there is a typical, but no less acute, situation when all the offered generalizing histories of the early Rus' do not correspond to the modern understanding of the epistemological status and specificity of those texts whose data served as a basis for these generalizations. First, it has fundamentally changed the factual basis for the description and analysis of the early history of the Rus' from the ninth to the beginning of the eleventh century. This is because the 'Primary Chronicle' (*i.e.*, 'The Tale of Bygone years') of the beginning of the twelfth century (The *Pověst Vremennykh lēt* 2003) is no considered a reliable basis for the early history of Rus' in the ninth-tenth centuries. Now it has finally become clear, although it was established in the first half of the twentieth century (Shchavelev 2020b: 22–54), that the text of this chronicle is the result of literary efforts, and a significant part of its oldest part is a compilation of translations of Byzantine chronicles and publicist notes of its author, projecting the reality of Rus' at the turn of the eleventh and twelfth centuries onto the 'pre-Christian' past. All year dates in the 'Primary Chronicle' up to the eleventh century are artificial forgeries and unreliable (Shchavelev 2020b: 416). They cannot be used either as 'approximate' or 'conventional' chronological reference points for the early history of the Rus'. The same is entirely true for the narrative of the earlier 'Initial Compilation', which is partly reflected in the Novgorodian chronicle tradition and predates the 'Primary Chronicle' (Guimon 2021: 91–173). Both the 'Initial Compilation' and the 'Primary Chronicle' preserve some fragments of an undated proto-text that has been tentatively called 'The Oldest Tale' of the mid-eleventh century (Shchavelev 2020b: 193–249; Guimon 2021: 111–119). In this proto-text it is possible to identify a number of fragments dating back to the oral tradition of the Rus' people, narrating the deeds of the first Russian princes and warlords of the tenth and

early eleventh centuries, and only these fragments can be used to study the initial period of the history of the Rurikid polity (Shchavelev 2020b: 337–408).

Absolutely the same should be said about the stories about the early history of Rus' in the *Old Norse sagas*, which received written fixation not earlier than in the twelfth–thirteenth centuries. The sagas reflected only separate units of onomastics and some phenomena of social and cultural reality of the Viking Age of the tenth–eleventh centuries (Jackson 2019), the main plots and descriptions of events related to the Rus' in them are extremely stereotypical and cannot be fully verified.

Thus, both Old Russian and Old Norse retrospective later narrative texts became not basic but secondary additional sources for the history of the East European Plain in the ninth to early eleventh centuries. There is no need to think that these are unique precedents: nowadays almost all early historiographical works of the early Middle Ages, the so-called 'barbarian histories', are recognized more as literary and ideological projects rather than as protocol fixations of reliable knowledge about the past of this or that 'barbarian nation' (Goffart 2005; Shchavelev and Guimon 2022).

Now the early history of Rus' is studied on the basis of synchronous written texts, sometimes, certainly, reached in later variants and revisions: Latin, Arabic, Middle Greek, and Church Slavonic. For the politics of the Rurikid lineage in the Middle Dnieper area, the main corpus of data is given by three treaties of Princes Oleg, Igor, and Svyatoslav with Byzantine emperors (*I trattati dell'antica Russia con l'Impero romano d'Oriente* 2011) and Byzantine treatises, first of all, the diplomatic manuals 'De administrando imperio' of the middle 950s (Constantine Porphyrogenitus 1967) and 'De cerimonies' of 963 (Constantine Porphyrogenitus 2012).

Synchronous texts allow us to create a scientifically grounded new chronology of events that led to the formation of the Rurikid polity, which began to form at the turn of the ninth and tenth centuries. The first reliable date is the date of the Prince Oleg's treaty – September 2, 911. As a result of the refusal to use artificial constructions of the 'Primary Chronicle' reflecting the geographical realities of the Rus' in the middle of the eleventh century, it is necessary to draw a new map of the basic urban centres of the tenth-century East European Plain, which together formed the basic infrastructure of the 'Empire of the Rurikids' (Shchavelev 2020a, 2020b, 2023b).

In order to adequately assess the *type of political organization* and the *level of complexity* of particular Rurikid polity, it is necessary to consider two key points. The first is the specific features of the written sources. The picture of ‘the beginning of the Russian land’, which is presented in the ‘Initial Compilation’ and the ‘Primary Chronicle’, modernizes the reality of the tenth century under the realities of the second half of the eleventh century – the beginning of the twelfth century. The second is the historiographic point: the fragments of these two chronicles were subjected to a number of misinterpretations by researchers who tried their best to maximize and extend the ‘Old Russian state’.

Considering the modern state of the research on the Rurikid polity, it is possible to state that it was created in the tenth century, and we know nothing about the social organization of the Rus' groups in the ninth century. For example, we do not know whether there was an ‘institute’ of the retinue (*resp.* ‘*дружина*’) in the ninth century. The ‘ladder system of succession of authority’ (the so-called ‘*lestvitsa*’) among the princes of the Rurikids appeared not earlier than the middle of the eleventh century, and in the tenth century, authority was transferred either from the father or mother to son (from Olga to Svyatoslav, from Svyatoslav to Yaropolk, *etc.*) or from husband to wife (from Igor to Olga), or it was seized in the struggle of brothers for elimination (twice, first between the sons of Svyatoslav Igorevich, and then between the sons of Vladimir Svyatoslavich). The territory of the polity was simply divided between relatives, princes, and other persons of status (*e.g.*, the warlord Sveneld). Possible institutions of ‘gafol’ (*resp.* ‘*полюдие*’) and ‘feeding’ (*resp.* ‘*кормъ*’ or ‘*кормление*’) in the tenth century are not fixed. The supposed mention of ‘poliudie’ in the treatise ‘De administrando imperio’ in the 950s is a misreading of the indication that people Rus' go from Kiev to ‘towns’ (Middle Greek: τὸ πολίδιον / τὸ πολείδιον > τὸ πολύδιον) on the territory of the Slavs (Shchavelev 2021b) and get food there, since in Kiev the Rus' survived on the verge of starvation and lack of cattle (Shchavelev 2020a). Similarly, speculations about the ‘reforms of Princess Olga’ are the result of an uncritical reading of the annalistic text. If we read it literally, it describes only the arrangement of the territories that personally belonged to Olga and her family (The *Pověst Vremennych lēt* 2003: 376–383), but not the whole polity. On the basis of this text, there is no good reason to single out *pogosts* (‘*погостъ*’) and to consider them as special, specialized ‘hotels’ for the prince and his companions. It is one of the types of small settlements among many others

(‘становище’, ‘ловище’, ‘мѣсто’, ‘село’, *etc.*) of not too clear functional meaning, nothing more. Finally, the question of the extent to which the chronicle text on the activities of Princess Olga reflects the terminology of the mid-tenth century and the realities of the eleventh century remains open.

As Nikolai N. Kradin rightly states, the accumulation of empirical archaeological data has not yet led to a shift in its conceptual generalization (2003a: 68). Continuing his idea, it should be emphasized that the matter is not only in the caste archaeologists' rejection of the modern theory of the evolution of societies and polities, but also in the fact that they continue to uncritically superimpose archaeological data on the map of the ‘Primary Chronicle’, and persistently continue to adjust their interval dating to the false chronology of the Old Russian Chronicle. It is also necessary to agree with Alexei A. Romanchuk that the attribution of ‘ethnic’ labels (‘Scandinavian’, ‘Varangian’, ‘Slavonic’, *etc.*) to archaeological artefacts and reconstructed phenomena of spiritual culture (first of all, elements of funerary rites or styles of clothing and accessories) is done in an extremely simple and outdated way (Romanchuk 2023: 102–103).

Continuing the theme of methodological difficulties in the interpretation of archaeological data, I would like to address the problem of identifying the types of political systems on the basis of archaeological evidence without the use of written sources. The modern understanding of the process of *evolution of social and political systems* as *multilinear* and *with alternative variants of realization* (Bondarenko, Grinin, Korotayev 2002; 2011) dictates the inevitable conclusion that archaeology can only show the *level of complexity of society*; for example, it allows us to identify a certain *medium-scale polity*, but it cannot answer the question, ‘To which type does this polity belong?’ Thus, Timothy Earle's archaeological criteria for *chiefdoms* (2021: 47–65) are applicable to any polity or complex society that can be mobilized by some mechanisms of ‘collective action’, and do not capture the main feature of chiefdom – the presence of a *chief* and *his ruling lineage*. Similarly, archaeology cannot identify the *early state* because its main criterion – the *presence of general and specialized functionaries* (Kradin 2023a: 78–81) – is virtually unrecognizable archaeologically. Finally, the conclusion that archaeological data alone cannot distinguish a *complex chiefdom* from an *early state* inevitably follows from this. And it is this last question that most often confronts the researchers of the Early Medieval East European Plain.

Since the main ideas of Romanchuk's article are largely based on linguistic evidence, I should also touch upon epistemological problems in this area. Indeed, comparative historical linguistics provides reliable reconstructions of earlier linguistic condition, for example of Old Norse or Old Common Slavonic languages. Similarly, the 'phonetic recalculation' of words in the transition from one language to another has its own regularities in the case of regular language contacts. However, regular linguistic rules and laws do not work when they come to *multilingual, multicultural societies*, where individual lexemes of the speech are recorded in foreign-language 'external' texts (Thomason 2001).

Thus, Romanchuk considers 'epoch-making' (2023: 100) the article by Sergey L. Nikolaev, who reconstructed a certain archaic 'Varangian dialect' of Old Norse on the basis of the list of ambassadors and their confidants in the treaties of Rus' princes with Byzantine emperors. I will briefly summarize my doubts, which, it seems to me, ultimately require that this hypothesis not to be used as a basis for ethnocultural reconstructions, but that we wait for its evaluation by specialists. First of all, the hypothesis of 'Varangian dialect' does not pass the experimental test. The onomasticon of these treaties studied by Elena A. Melnikova (2004), Anton Zimmerling (2012) (whom Romanchuk rightly calls 'one of the greatest Russian Germanists of our time' in his article: Romanchuk 2003: 98), and Bohdan O. Strumiński (1996) did not reveal any special dialect different from the standard Old Norse. Secondly, the linguistic reconstruction of onomastic units should be preceded by a textual reconstruction of the chronicle text in which they have reached us. In this case, it is necessary to compare the six main witnesses of the 'Primary Chronicle' (Guimon 2021: 93–100) according to a certain procedure, the original text of which is determined by the coincidence of independent readings (Gippius 2014). And in this case, it was not made by Nikolaev. Thirdly, the evolution of the text of the treaties of the Rus' princes with the Byzantines is now quite clear: their originals were written in Greek; no Church Slavonic version existed; then they were copied into a Byzantine copy book (*i.e.*, a kind of 'cartularium', Greek: 'τὸ κοινάκιον'); at the beginning of the twelfth century, they were translated into Old Church Slavonic and then copied into the original 'Primary Chronicle' which was then edited and 'dispersed' into different copies. Besides, we quite understand that during the procedure of the ratification of the treaties, the list of names of Rus' elite and their ambassadors should have been pronounced by someone from the side of

Rus', and then transferred by Byzantine translators to the scribes-compilers of the treaties. I consider it incredible to expect that, after all these procedures, the onomastics of the treaties will be well preserved and that any regular linguistic signs of any special dialects will be read. Finally, I emphasize that Sergey N. Nikolaev's earlier attempt to reconstruct an allegedly ancient 'dialect of Krivichi' has been convincingly rejected (Krysko 1997).

On the basis of the above-stated, I will try to summarize my view of the process of *ethnogenesis* of Rus' and *politogenesis* of its separate local communities. In the ninth century the East European plains were integrated into the global trade-communication system, actually the World-economy, of Eurasia (Hodges and Whitehouse 1983; McCormick 2001, cf. Kradin 2023a: 74–75). In the tenth century, *emporía*, which were simultaneously political centres of local polities, emerged at some nodal points of this trade and communication network. It was the emergence of these new *emporía* that launched a fundamentally new round in the process of *urbanization* on the East European Plain. The resources for this growth of urban centres and their satellite settlements were provided by the long-distance trade and occasional booty. Here a very promising direction is the concept of 'Viking Diaspora', which characterizes the material and spiritual culture 'Circum-Baltoscandia' as hybrid and transnational for the communities forming within the oikumene of Western Eurasia as part of the global Eurasian space (Jesch 2015; Katona 2023; Shchavelev 2023a). Thus, the *formation of the early state Rus'* was a classic case of the transformation of a fragment of the *World-economy* into a new *World-empire* in the form of *multipolity* (Kradin 2023a: 83), which, however, was characterized by a very specific structure and complex formats of consolidation, but this is a completely separate issue, still not considered by scholars from the point of view and with the help of the methods of political anthropology.

The territory of the spread of this World-economy, which later became the core of the future World-empire of Rus', was inhabited by hybrid communities of the 'Viking diaspora', which mixed migrants from the 'Circum-Baltoscandia' macro-region and autochthonous aborigines. As Klavs Randsborg has shown, the process of spreading the 'Viking diaspora' was isomorphic, though not completely identical, to the so-called *Great Greek colonization*, which also created a network of port city-colonies in which hybrid traditions of Greek migrants and natives were formed (Randsborg 2000). So, the Viking way of life and

mode of the production (Kradin 2023a: 74; 2023b: 157–158) was not unique in history (Glørstud and Melheim 2016).

According to archaeological data, 96 relatively large settlements of the ninth century and 134 large settlements of the tenth century have been identified on the East European Plain (Makarov 2017). The full list of the ninth-century emporiums and centres of local polities is still to be compiled, but for now we can single out the archaeological complexes of *Ladoga*, the 'Rurikovo' *Gorodische*, the *Izborsk*, *Vitebsk*, *Sarskoe*, and *Supruty*. Among the large political centres I will also mention the archaeological complex *Podgortsy* (its name is not known and the identification with Plesnesk is not based on anything). Potentially, all of them should or could have been centres of the formation of polities of a new type, but such research has not been conducted yet. The largest of them, *Ladoga* with the archaeological complexes of 'Rurikovo' *Gorodische*, *Supruty*, and *Podgortsy*, were located on the outskirts of the areas of intensive socio-economic and political development. *Ladoga* in the North was a port on the southern coast of the Baltic Sea, connected with intensive Baltic Sea traffic; *Podgortsy* was the outskirts of the *complex chieftdom* of the Mojmirid dynasty, that is, the old Slavic polity of *Moravia*; *Supruty* was the outskirts of the *complex chieftdom* of the Khazars. But the basic territories of the East European Plain were inhabited in the ninth century by scattered *local societies* with rather simple social and political organization.

The explosive spread of the 'Circum-Baltoscandia' 'Viking' traditions dates from the last quarter of the ninth century to the first quarter of the tenth. In the same period there was a boom in *urbanization*, and all the major cities of the tenth – the first half of the eleventh century appeared, in which the *Old Russian archaeological culture* was formed. All of them are characterized by a similar territorial structure and the sociological reality behind it. From the point of view of archaeology, I could call the new collectives of these urban centres 'Vikings', who in the ninth–eleventh centuries underwent a total 'nomadization' in the military sphere and a complete linguistic transition from Old Norse to Old Common Slavonic, but with the preservation of a bright 'Viking' heritage. Thus, at present, I do not see any specific elements of this early urban culture of the East European Plain of the tenth century that could be considered as unique ethno-cultural markers exclusively of the Rus' collectives, which would distinguish them from other groups of inhabitants of these cities.

The reference sites of the formative period of the *Old Russian archaeological culture* should be considered as archaeological complexes, consisting of a *fortified citadel*, a *port area*, an *urban burial ground*, and *sub-centres of the second level*, not far away, which are mini-copies of the main centre (Shchhavelev 2023a, 2023b). In this exemplary group of reference complexes, according to the above-mentioned features, we can include *Kiev* (Old Norse: **Sambátar* / **Sambátr* or *Kænugarðr* / *Kænugarðr*), the archaeological complex of *Shestovysya* (Old Norse: **Kjarravellir*?), the archaeological complex of *Gnezdovo* (Old Norse: **Sýrnesgarðr*?) and *Ladoga* (Old Norse: *Aldeigja* or *Aldeigjuborg*), as well as ‘Rurikovo’ *Gorodische* (Old Norse: *Hólmgarðr*?) (here there is no burial ground and the question of the centres of the second level is open), *Novgorod* on the Volkhov (no burial ground), *Pskov* (the question about the port zone and the centres of the second level is open) and *Chernigov* (the question of the port zone is open).

The people who began to use the Old Russian Slavonic self-name ‘*роусь*’ (or *роусици*, *русичи*; *sing.* *роусинъ*, *русичь*) were formed in the tenth century precisely in these new urban centers and probably in a number of other smaller ones. Representatives of the Rus’ in the tenth century are reliably fixed by written sources only in the Middle and Upper Dnieper area; their presence in the Il’men’ and Volkhov areas remains questionable, though very probable. Groups of people called Rus’ already from the first half of the ninth century are reliably attested as carriers of Old Norse and Old Common Slavonic languages (Shchhavelev 2024). Thus, the ethnogenesis of the new Rus’ people in the tenth century was a result of *urbanization* and the resulting *hybridization of the population* in new settlement clusters. In other words, the Rus’ people formed and lived in these new emporia, where all the inhabitants were migrants, some from distant lands, some from the neighborhood. So, absolutely endogenous Rus’ people did not migrate from somewhere outside. They adopted as their own name a Slavicized form of the Old Norse designation ‘**rōþ-s-menn*’, meaning a ‘professional group of rowers’, which had the same semantic as the Old North ‘*viking*, pl. *vikingr*’ belonging to the root ‘*vika*’, ‘sea mile’, originally a ‘distance between two shifts of rowers’ (Heide 2005, 2006, 2008). But they were quite autochthonous to the East European Plain (Shchhavelev 2024), so whatever the etymology of their ethnonym (cf. Romanchuk 2023: 99–100), it does not change the essence of their ethnogenesis.

Here it is necessary to emphasize, that the version about the arrival of the 'Rus' people' together with the legendary Prince Rurik and his brothers 'from beyond the sea' of the 'Primary Chronicle' (The *Pověst Vremennych lět* 2003: 101–109) is no more than a late etiological myth based on the later anachronistic motif of 'ryad' ('contact') (cf. Romanchuk 2023: 101). Moreover, the early version of this myth reflected in the 'Initial Compilation' and going back to the 'Oldest Tale', does not contain the motive of the arrival of 'all Rus' people'. In this proto-text Rurik comes only with his brothers and 'numerous retinue'. This is my preliminary reconstruction of the text of the 'Oldest Tale' on the basis of comparing the reading of the witnesses of the 'Primary Chronicle' with the variants of the Novgorod chronicle tradition:

*И избърашася ихъ три брата с роды своими и пояша с собою дружину многу и прииде к Новугороду. И пришедъ старѣишии Рюрикъ и сѣде въ Новѣгороде... / [And three brothers with their clans volunteered from them (the Varangians) and took with them a large retinue and came to Novgorod. And the elder Rurik came and settled in Novgorod].

Thus, the oral tradition of Rus' spoke only about the inviting of the first prince Rurik of Varangian origin by the coalition of local communities. The interpolation of the mention of Rus' in this text is the literary work of the author of the 'Primary Chronicle' who transformed a legend of the *origo regis* type into a legend of the *origo gentis* type (Plassmann 2006). The whole text of this literary legend is full of anachronisms (the most vivid are Novgorod on Volkhov and Varangians before the first quarter – middle of the tenth century), with the exception, perhaps, of the arrival of the father of the Prince of Kiev Igor from the north and the obvious Old Norse origin of the authentic names of the first princes (Melnikova 2004).

In the ninth and eleventh centuries, the East European Plain became an arena of military and, apparently, economic competition between emerging and disappearing polities of different sizes, levels of organizational complexity and types. This competition itself seems to have been a catalyst for the formation of centralized political systems, the first *chiefdoms* (Skalník 2004, 2009; Earle 2021) and *consolidated communities* capable of sustained 'collective action' (Blanton and Fargher 2008). Transnational trade and regular racketeering ('tribute') provided the elites with *capital* to invest in a *military organization*

that could be used to expropriate the capital accumulated by other collectives. The most important resource for the capitalization of these militarized trading communities was literally tons of Oriental silver *dirhams* and some other currencies from the Byzantine and Carolingian realms (Kuleshov 2021). The logic identified by Charles Tilly of building *centralized political systems*, ‘concentration of capital’, ‘construction of the military machine’, ‘creation of infrastructures of tax withdrawal’ is quite applicable not only to *early states* and their analogues, but also to different types of *chiefdoms* (Earle 2021) or other *dominant communities* (Tilly 1990).

I will try to make a preliminary catalogue of the major polities and their centres in the ninth and eleventh centuries. This list can, of course, be continued, but it will require an introduction to scientific turn and the comprehension of a huge array of archaeological data.

I would like to emphasize that the stories of the ‘Primary Chronicle’ about ‘reigns’ (Old Russian Church Slavonic: ‘княжения’) of different Slavic communities can give nothing for political-anthropological reconstruction, except the fact that these communities probably had some traditional leaders whom the chronicler of the beginning of the twelfth century called ‘princes’ (resp. ‘князья’). Certainly, these ‘princes’ cannot be considered *chiefs* in the terminological sense. The social thesaurus of the chronicle does not consist of special social terms; for example, the Old Russian author called a *warlord* (resp. ‘воевода’) someone who was at the head of an army, and a *prince* (resp. ‘князь’) someone who was at the head of a nation or other large community. So, the lexemes ‘княжение’ and ‘князь’ cannot serve even nominal indication of *chiefs* and *chiefdoms*.

It is obvious that *urbanization* and the process of *formation of supra-local political structures* took place in the Volkhov area (Petrov 1996; Melnikova 2023). It was an ancient cluster of urbanization, formed as early as the late eighth and ninth centuries. It was here that a new city of Novgorod appeared on the Volkhov in the 930s, becoming a key centre in the tenth century and then be incorporated into the Rurikid Empire, becoming its key outpost in the north in the eleventh century. Here some ethno-political community under the name *Slovene* (Old Common Slavonic: *словѣне*) was formed, probably the first governor of Novgorod and (or) the first representative of the princes Rurikids in it was the person named *Gostomysl* (Old Common Slavonic: *Гостомысль*). The time of his board lies between the foundation of Novgorod in the 930s and the beginning of the reign in Novgorod Prince-Bastard *Vladimir Svyatoslavich*, which had begun until about

968–969. It is difficult to trace the trajectory of political transformation of this northern polity in this early period, but the *Slovene* people were the main associated partners of the Rus' in the tenth century. Two capitals, Kiev and Novgorod, ensured the control of the backbone of the emerging *early state* on the route 'from the Varangians to the Greeks and from the Greeks back' (Shchavelev 2020b: 250–336).

The large, medium-sized polity was apparently formed by Slavic-speaking people called *Sever* (Old Common Slavonic: *северъ* or *северяне*) on the left bank of the Dnieper. Its political center was a large city, now the archeological complex of *Gornal*. The type of their political system cannot be determined due to a lack of written sources. But these people had a distinct identity, their own tradition of material and spiritual culture, some kind of monetary system, and extensive trade and communication ties. It was conquered by the Rurikids only in the eleventh century (Shchavelev 2020b: 250–336; 2021c: 299–319). In the tenth century, on the right bank of the Dnieper, the people of *Drevlyane* (Old Common Slavonic: *древляне*) formed a 'principality' with the centre of Korosten' and about 20 sub-centres. It was a classical *chieftdom* headed by Prince Mal (Old Common Slavonic: *Маль*) and his kinsmen-princes. It was destroyed in the 950s by the Kiev chief-woman Olga and her warlords (Androshchuk 2013: 65–89; Shchavelev 2020b: 250–336; 2021c: 299–319). Another polity has developed around Polotsk on the Wester Dvina, where Prince Rogvolod (Old Norse: **Rögnvaldr*), his two sons, and his daughter Rogneda (Old Norse: *Ragnheiðr*) ruled (Kezha 2021). It can be characterized as an attempt to create a *chieftdom*. This polity was conquered by the Rurikid prince Vladimir Svyatoslavich (†1015), but maintained the separate dynasty of Rogneda's descendants and autonomy within the empire of Rurikids. At the beginning of the tenth century, a *medium-scale polity* was formed around the large urban centre, the real megapolis of that time, called *Sýrnesgarðr* (now, the Gnezdovo archaeological complex), and it was eliminated at the beginning of the eleventh century (Shchavelev and Fetisov 2023).

Within the Rurikid polity, an alternative centre was formed and separated as a single polity: *Chernigov and its suburbs*, where, at the end of the tenth century and beginning of the eleventh century, a certain chief named Chern (**Чернь*) ruled and was buried in a large mound, the 'Black Grave' (Kainov 2022), and then the brother of the Prince Yaroslav Vladimirovich (†1054), Mstislav Vladimirovich the Furious (†1036? or earlier), tried to create a polity separate from Kiev,

but his polity failed after his and his son Eustachius' deaths. It was a moment, when Rus' could become two different early states with two different dynasties, one centred in Kiev and Novgorod, another centred in Chernigov, and with a border along the Dnieper.

The victory in the global competition was won by the *complex chiefdom of the Rurikids* with its centre in Kiev (Shchhavelev 2020a). The *complex chiefdom* of the Rurikids spent the second half of the tenth – first half of the eleventh century in global expansion. After the acceptance of Christianity by Prince Vladimir Svyatoslavich, the population of the territories subordinated to him began to transform (not only by Old Russian writers-ideologists, but also in the years of foreign Latin and Greek authors) into the *new Christian folk* (Wolfram 2001), called by the prestigious and recognizable ethnopolitical label 'poycb' (Shchhavelev 2024).

It is precisely in this context that it is possible to trace the dynamics of its political development with a high degree of reliability (Shchhavelev 2020a, 2020b). At the turn of the ninth–tenth centuries, Prince Igor and his warlord Oleg conquered Kiev, which, according to archaeological data, became an emporium in the last quarter of the ninth century. The entire urban cluster of the Middle Dnieper region, including Chernigov, as well as the major centre of the *Shestovytsya* archaeological complex, was formed at the turn of the ninth and tenth centuries, not earlier. It was not until the beginning of the tenth century that the oldest hoards of Arabian silver appeared in Kiev; a burial ground with rich burials of armed men was created; and fortifications were built (Shchhavelev 2020a; 2021c: 275–286). On September 2, 911 Oleg concluded a treaty with the Byzantine Emperor Leo VI the Wise (†912) and his co-emperors. Kiev and Chernigov appeared in this treaty. The treaty of 911 manifests a certain *identity* of Rus' and the belonging of these people to the defined 'Russian land'. The fact that in Rus', according to the treaty, there is a 'great prince' (in the Greek original, of course, the '*great archon*') Oleg, does not say anything about what his power was: whether he was a temporary *warlord*, a *bigman* or a *mediator* of his society, or already a full-fledged *chief*. The ratio of authority between Prince Igor Rurikovich and Oleg remains a matter of conjecture. In the historical memory of the Rus' people, the first prince of Kiev was Igor, but the successful campaign to Byzantium was made by Oleg, and Oleg signed the first treaty with Byzantine emperors. But in this treaty, there was no mention of any relative of the major archon, the ambassadors only represent their leader Oleg, their 'nation' and their land, so it is not a *chiefdom* with a

ruled privileged lineage (I trattati dell'antica Russia con l'Impero romano d'Oriente 2011: 27–65).

Comparing the treaties of Oleg and Igor (I trattati dell'antica Russia con l'Impero romano d'Oriente 2011) with the Byzantine emperors and also the treatise 'De cerimonies' 963 (Constantine Porphyrogenetos 2012: 511, 594–598), it is clear that it was not until the middle of the tenth century that the lineage of the ruling prince (his wife, children, nephews, and other relatives) became distinguished and privileged (Byzantine officials gave them much more money). Moreover, after the death of Prince Igor, his wife Olga ('Elga Rose-na') became the full ruler of Rus', *archontissa of Russia* (Middle Greek: ἡ ἀρχόντισσα Ῥωσίας). From the very beginning, this polity had the centre of Kiev and the centres of the second level (Chernigov, Vyshgorod, etc.). Some autonomous Slavic polities were subordinate to it. The militaristic, warlords, warriors, and the plutocratic, professional merchants, group elites are clearly distinguished. Thus, from the middle of the tenth century, a *complex chieftdom* existed (Shchavelev 2020a, 2021c, 2024).

However, no signs of an *early state*, i.e. of a 'special form of government of the complex societies, a machinery of power which... identified with bureaucracy' or a 'group of special functionaries' (Kradin 2023a: 77–78) can be observed until the end of the tenth century.

Only Prince Vladimir Svyatoslavich apparently tried to create a certain apparatus of functionaries following the Byzantine model from children of elite families who were devoted to 'book learning': 'He sent and began to take children from respectable families and gave them to study books. The mothers of these children weep for them, cry, as if they were dead [Пославъ, нача поимати у нарочитыя чадѣ дѣти и даяти на учение кънижное. Матери же чадѣ своихъ плакаху ся по нихъ... нъ акы мъртвыцихъ плакаху ся]' (The Povest Vremennykh lët. 2003: 924–925). The literacy-trained *cleric* or *functionary* of the *early state* virtually died for his family and kin and entered a completely different world of written culture and new state hierarchy. During his reign a special prince and church courts (Shchapov 1972: 99–101) appeared (Zimin 1999: 357–362). He was the first prince, who issued a ratified diploma (charter) (The Povest Vremennykh lët 2003: 973–974; Guimon 2021: 143).

The actual apparatus of functionaries working on the basis of written practices could not appear before the emergence of a generation of minimally literate representatives of the elite (Goody 1996; Shchavelev 2021a). The earliest period of written culture is well

marked by the *four oldest birch-bark letters* with the interval dates 1025–1050. Their content is characteristic: a threat to a malicious debtor, a case of a false accusation of robbery, an alphabet, and an icon (<http://gramoty.ru/birchbark/document/list/?requestId=&number=&conventionalDateInitialYear=1020&conventionalDateFinalYear=1050&text=&translation=>). These are the main topics of writing practices: literacy training; getting used to a new god; fixing the operations with money; and legal procedures. Thus, the *early state* could not have appeared in Rus' earlier than during this period – in 1025–1050.

There are even more important milestones in the emergence of the *early state*. The Rurikid *chiefdom* was transformed into an *early state* during the period of issue of two *official legal documents*: the 'Statute of Prince Vladimir', compiled between the 990s and his death in 1015 (Shchapov 1972: 12–156; Guimon 2020: 323, 143), and the 'Russian Pravda' of Yaroslav Vladimirovich, compiled no later than in the 1030s (Zimin 1999: 31–150; Guimon 2021: 18, 35, 147). It was impossible to create such performative texts without *professional functionaries*, *i.e.*, first *bureaucrats*, who acquired the art of writing practice and a special way of thinking (*cf.* Spencer 2014; Crooks, Parsons 2016; Berkel, van 2018). This first stage of the *state formation process* is symbolically completed by the *graffiti* of February 20, 1054 on the death of 'Caesar' Yaroslav Vladimirovich (<http://epigrafika.ru/epigraphy/inscription/show/300>). It was the semi-official written proclamation of the death of the *sovereign state ruler*.

Therefore, I do not fix the emergence of the *early state* on unreliable points of reference from retrospective 'fairy tales' of Old Russian chroniclers of the beginning of the twelfth century. For them 'their' 'Russian Princely' existed since ancient times and did not change in any way from Rurik to his descendants, their contemporary Princes, but according to the only objective criterion, *i.e.*, *documents* and *written records* issued by its *governors* and *functionaries*.

Now we have an opportunity to trace the speed and schedule of increase in *complexity* of the Rurikid polity: its center Kiev appeared in the last quarter of the ninth century; the polity was founded around 900, in the 950s it already acquired all the features of a *complex chiefdom*, in the 990s to 1054 it was transformed into a typical *early state*. It was created by four generations of princes and noblemen (Shchachev 2020b: 409–416). The first generation can be called the 'foreign conquerors', who were people born before Igor and Oleg and who came from the north and conquered Kiev, represented by Prince Igor and his wife Olga. The second generation were 'the first natives of

Kiev' and the Middle Dnieper region, represented by Prince Svyatoslav and his concubine, the slave-girl Malusha, the mother of the future ruler of Kiev, Vladimir. The third generation were the 'last pagans', the generation of Vladimir and his elderly wife Rogneda of Polotsk. Vladimir won the war for power, accepted Christianity and founded his own dynasty. The fourth generation is already the 'first generation of Christians,' that is, people who were born into Christian society and baptized at birth. This generation was represented by Vladimir's sons and his other younger relatives (Shchavelev 2020a).

So, the Rurikid polity was a typical case of the emergence of plutocratic and military *complex chieftdom* on the far limes of the Byzantine Empire on the border with nomads of the steppe and its subsequent standard transformation into an *early state*. It was a common example of *secondary politogenesis*, the process of state formation through the external influence of the neighboring *developed state*.

Here it is necessary to pay attention to the greatly underestimated social process of the formation of *elites* ('oligarchies') in the first urban centres of Rus' in the tenth and first half of the eleventh centuries. The main Russian cities formed their own elite, which apparently consisted of the *owners of estates* described in the chronicles as 'yards' (Old Russian: 'дворъ') and other assets, the *owners and captains of ships*, and *millionaires* who had accumulated *thousands of coins* (Shchavelev 2024). For example, in the legend 'The Founder of Kiev' the main character Kiy was a 'ferryman' on the Dnieper, he owed a river crossing infrastructure. Besides, there was a system of transport from the port to the centre of the Kiev city ('оувозъ'), which belonged to a certain man Borich, who participated in the ratification of Prince Igor's treaty (The Pověst Vremennych lět 2003: 44, 47–48, 336, 906; I trattati dell'antica Russia con l'Impero romano d'Oriente 2011: 68). Some homesteaders are mentioned by name: Olma (Old Norse: Hólmr / Hólmi), Gordyata, Vorotislav, Nikiphor, Chudin, Kosnyachko, Bryacheslav, Putyata, etc (Kuzmin 2000). It is possible to suppose that the Rurikid lineage was originally such a rich family, advancing to the first roles and occupying a dominant position in Kiev.

Representatives of the urban elites could have some relations with the prince of the Rurikid clan and be in his service, but they could have their own resources and militarized formations. These elites were able to carry out *collective actions* of political pressure on Prince Rurikid. The people of Novgorod ('новгородцы' or 'люди новгородьстии') are ready to accept the prince who is not from the Rurikid family, and directly threatened Prince Svyatoslav Igorevich with this

(The *Pověst Vremennych lět* 2003: 468–473). People of Kiev (‘кияне’, ‘кыяне’ or ‘люди кыевъстии’) appear as independent actors since the second half of the tenth century (The *Pověst Vremennych lět* 2003: 347, 359, 449, 469–473, 549, 1122–1127, 1142–1144, 1170–1171). The people of Kiev did not accept the victorious prince Mstislav Vladimirovich and supported Yaroslav Vladimirovich, who had lost the battle with him, but the people of Chernigov (‘черниговъцы’) on contrary accepted Mstislav as their ruler (The *Pověst Vremennych lět* 2003: 1142–1144). And in 1067, the people of Kiev overthrew Prince Izyaslav Yaroslavich and put the representative of a separate dynasty from Polotsk, Vseslav Bryachislavich, as the ruler of their city (The *Pověst Vremennych lět* 2003: 1362–1372). Then they unequivocally declared to the brother princes, sons of Yaroslav, that they will burn Kiev, go to Byzantium, and live there, and this statement is not pure rhetoric, but a quite real scenario of the development of events (The *Pověst Vremennych lět* 2003: 1383–1395).

This is a parallel process of *politogenesis*, the formation of *urban societies* at least in large cities, which were *collective political actors*. Each *community* established relations with Rurikid Princes. They could conclude a contract with them, and they could simply become dependent on any prince. In this case, the history of the urban community of Novgorod on Volkhov is unique only by the trajectory of its development, but not in its ‘republican’ vector. I should fully agree with Nikolai N. Kradin that the model of describing the Rus’ as a constellation of ‘city-states’ was the most productive in previous historiography (Kradin 2023a: 68, 82), although, of course, from the point of view of modern political anthropology we may talk about *local urban societies* that had no signs of a state and probably no stable institutions, manifesting only situational collective political identity in extreme cases. Apparently, these communities of large cities (we simply do not know anything about smaller ones) can be characterized as *heterarchic societies* – collectives of men and women with full and equal rights, endowed with property and money.

During the eleventh century, a *decimal system* of population coordination was established in the cities – headed by thousand (‘тысяцкий’, ‘тысячский’), hundred (‘сътъникъ’, ‘сотъникъ’) and ten (‘десятникъ’, ‘десятьский’) men (The *Pověst Vremennych lět* 2003: 988, 1166–1167; Zimin 1999: 191–216). The early accounts unambiguously linked the decimal system to cities; its spread to the countryside was a much later phenomenon, apparently already post-Mongol. It is certainly not an ancient ‘Slavic’ tradition of division of

men or families, nor also a system of accounting and control of the population depending on the prince. It is most likely that its creation is the result of primary descriptions and quantification of the basic territories – key urban centres and possibly their surroundings – by the first *functionaries* (future *bureaucrats*) of the early state of Rus'.

It can be assumed that the 'owners of yards' and other assets, primarily those related to shipbuilding and port infrastructure, constituted the elite of the first *emporia*. The *chiefs* of the first medium-scale polities came from this melee. *Serving men* ('мужн') and *functionaries* of the Rurikid princes formed an *alternative hierarchical system* that controlled the 'external contour' of a *chiefdom*, later an *early state*, and also the personal assets (territorial and material) of members of the Rurikid ruling lineage. And, quite obviously, one and the same person could freely belong to both the *urban oligarchy* and the *prince's clique*, and pass from one group of elites to the other.

Another important feature of the new elite of the eleventh-century Rus': it began to consist of people who fought on horseback, i.e., *catafracts* or *knights* (Cardini 2014). The nomads of the northern seas, the *Vikings* (Ling, Earle, Kristiansen 2018), first turned into 'river nomads' in the East European Plain (Katona 2023), and then the Rus' people adopted the steppe technologies of warfare on horseback, creating a military and political machine of heavy cavalry. The *clan of Rurikid princes*, their *warlords* and *men*, as well as the free 'owners of yards' and 'captains of the boats' of the second half of the tenth–eleventh centuries were equally the *ruling social group of horsemen* on whom the security of the steppe frontier depended.

As a final consideration, I would like to emphasize that the processes of *ethnogenesis* and *politogenesis* on the East European Plain in the ninth to eleventh centuries fit into the most standard models of *sociocultural* and *political anthropology*. *Long-distance trade routes* in the ninth and tenth centuries provided resources ('start-up capitals') for the *urbanization boom* in several nodes that became the *base territories of new polities*. All the tenth-century polities that can be identified and described in detail were *chiefdoms* of varying complexity. The rest, for which there is a lack of data, could theoretically be *some analogues of chiefdoms*, but this cannot be strictly proven. In these urban clusters a new *hybrid bilingual group* called Rus' with a separate *ethnic identity* was formed. A *complex chiefdom* of the Rurikids, the most successful in trade and military expansion, transformed under external influence in the first half of the eleventh century into an *early state*, which borrowed technologies of state management from the

Byzantine Empire, but also kept some traditional elements of the political practice typical for a chiefdom. The population of this early Rurikid state became a *new Christian people* called *Rus*'. All other polities lost this competition and were partly destroyed, partly incorporated into the 'Rurikid Empire'. It is hard to imagine a more standard pattern of increasing socio-political complexity (from *local communities* to *chiefdoms* and then to a *multipolity* 'empire', with an *early state* in the core) and a more typical timetable for this transformation (*about 150 years in total and four generations*).

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